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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 265th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 7 August 2002, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Fall ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. **The Chairman** drew attention to the provisional agenda. Given the detailed discussion of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, during the resumed tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly that week and the open debate in the Security Council two weeks previously, he suggested that the second item on the provisional agenda (developments in the Middle East peace process and the situation in the Occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem) should be deleted. If any delegation wished to make a broader statement, that could be accommodated under "Other matters" at the end of the meeting.

2. *The agenda, as orally revised, was adopted.*

Report by the Chairman on the United Nations African Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the United Nations Workshop of African NGOs on the Question of Palestine, 24 to 26 June 2002, Rabat

3. **The Chairman** said the United Nations African Meeting had been devoted to the theme "Achieving the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people — a key to peace in the Middle East". Fifteen experts had been invited from the occupied Palestinian territory, Israel, African countries and the United States and had participated in the three plenaries on the topics of the impact of the Israeli military offensive in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, challenges to a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and international efforts at salvaging peace in the Middle East as well as African support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The meeting had been successful and had been attended by representatives of 55 Governments, Palestine, two intergovernmental organizations, four United Nations bodies, including the Committee, and 16 non-governmental organizations as well as guests of the host country and representatives of academia and the media.

4. Participants had gained a better understanding of the destructive impact of the ongoing Israeli offensive and the challenges at hand and were therefore better equipped to evaluate current efforts at peacemaking. They had also reaffirmed the solidarity of the Governments and peoples of Africa with the plight of the Palestinian people and their support for political negotiations leading to a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement taking into account the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

5. The meeting had adopted a final communiqué, copies of which had been distributed to members. In the communiqué the participants reiterated their support for the Palestinian leadership, welcomed the process of reform of the Palestinian Authority and reaffirmed their recognition of the sovereign right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the commitment of African States to a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

6. The meeting had been followed by the United Nations Workshop of African NGOs on the Question of Palestine, with broad civil society participation and a lively discussion. The ideas submitted had led to the adoption of an NGO plan of action, which had likewise been distributed by the Secretariat.

7. He expressed his gratitude to the Government of Morocco for hosting the meeting and for its devotion to the search for peace in the Middle East and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The report of the United Nations African Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People would be issued in due course as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights. A copy of the final communiqué had already been posted on the UNISPAL and the NGO NETWORK web sites maintained by the Division.

8. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) thanked the members of the Committee for their efforts to assist the Palestinian cause. The recent United Nations African Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the United Nations Workshop of African NGOs on the Question of Palestine had been extremely successful, with excellent media coverage, a large number of participants and a strong final communiqué on core issues. She expressed her heartfelt thanks to the Government and people of Morocco for their warm welcome.

9. **Mr. Al-Kadiri** (Observer for Morocco) stressed his delegation's firm support for the very important work of the Committee and for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. His delegation would continue to participate in and encourage international efforts to achieve a fair and lasting peace in the Middle East.

10. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to take note of his report.

11. *It was so decided.*

Report by the Chairman on his participation at international conferences and meetings

12. **The Chairman** said he had been invited in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee to participate in the seventy-sixth and final ordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the thirty-eighth and final OAU summit and the first ordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, in which 53 States had participated, with only the Central African Republic and the Seychelles being absent.

13. The issues of Palestine and the Middle East were permanent items on the agenda of the African Union. Participants had denounced the continued Israeli aggression, destruction of infrastructure and humiliation of the Palestinian population, who were left with no alternative but recourse to sometimes repugnant actions and had expressed frustration at the Security Council's failure to ensure implementation of its resolutions, for example with regard to a mission of inquiry into the tragic events in Jenin. They had called on the international community to investigate such tragic events and abolish the culture of impunity and selective treatment, and looked forward in that regard to the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly.

14. Participants had welcomed the visit of the South African Minister for Foreign Affairs to Palestine at the head of a mission from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and had reaffirmed Africa's solidarity with the Palestinian people and their inalienable right to an independent and viable State. They had also proposed the creation of a special committee to ensure a greater African role in the quest for a solution to the Palestinian problem.

15. The Council of Ministers had reaffirmed its solidarity with the cause of the Palestinian people and called for an immediate end to the military siege imposed on President Arafat. They had condemned Israeli violation of Christian and Muslim holy sites in the Occupied Territories and interference with shipments of medicine and foodstuffs to Palestinian refugee camps. They had called for implementation of the Fourth Geneva Convention by the occupying Power and for renewed negotiations between Israel and Palestine and between Israel, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon based on Security Council resolutions. They had welcomed suggestions that an international force be deployed and called on the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to continue its efforts.

16. The first regular session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the African Union had also sent a message of solidarity to President Arafat and the Palestinian people. It had expressed great concern at the escalation in violence and the intensification of Israeli military operations, despite the appeals from the international community and the existence of an Arab peace plan which provided a historic opportunity for a lasting peace. It had strongly condemned the violence, destruction of infrastructure and murders carried out by the Israeli army in the occupied territories and the humiliation inflicted on Palestinian leaders and had unconditionally condemned the restrictions imposed on President Arafat, who had been unable to participate in that historic meeting of the African Union. It had further expressed Africa's commitment to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority and their inalienable right to self-determination and an independent State with East Jerusalem and had agreed to establish a Committee made up of 10 members with a view to restarting the Middle East peace process.

17. He took it that the Committee wished to take note of his report.

18. *It was so decided.*

International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People (Working paper No. 4)

19. **The Chairman** drew attention to the provisional programme for the international conference to be held at United Nations Headquarters on 23 and 24 September, as contained in working paper No. 4, which had been distributed by the Secretariat. He took it that the Committee wished to approve that provisional programme.

20. *It was so decided.*

Accreditation of civil society organizations with the Committee (Working papers Nos. 5 and 6)

Working paper No. 5: Note for the Committee

21. **The Chairman** drew attention to working paper No. 5, which recalled the established practice with regard to the accreditation of civil society organizations with the Committee and spelled out the entitlements and responsibilities of accredited organizations as well as of organizations with observer status. He recalled that the Palestinian people needed the support of as many groups as possible and that civil society organizations had been particularly influential in educating public opinion about the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and in collecting funds for humanitarian and development projects in the occupied Palestinian territory. A reinvigorated partnership between the Committee and international civil society would be beneficial to the Palestinian cause. The Bureau of the Committee had considered and approved the note and he took it that the Committee wished to approve working paper No. 5.

22. *It was so decided.*

Working paper No. 6: Accreditation of civil society organizations with the Committee

23. **The Chairman** drew attention to working paper No. 6, distributed in English only, which contained the applications of 41 non-governmental organizations requesting accreditation with the Committee. The Bureau of the Committee, assisted by the Division for Palestinian Rights, had reviewed the applications and concluded that they were recognized non-profit organizations which fulfilled the criteria for accreditation. The Bureau therefore recommended that they should be accredited.

24. **Mr. Meso** (South Africa) expressed concern that there were no African non-governmental organizations on the list, although he knew that there were in fact African non-governmental organizations involved in providing assistance to the Palestinian people.

25. **The Chairman** said that he had raised the same question in the Bureau and had been informed that there were many African non-governmental organizations already accredited to the Committee. The Committee had not, however, examined applications for accreditation since 1998 and, coincidentally, the current applicants did not include any African NGOs. He noted for the Committee's information that some 1,036 NGOs were on the Committee's distribution list, with 701 accredited and 108 having observer status.

26. **Mr. Benítez Versón** (Cuba) asked whether any of the NGOs included in working paper No. 6 had ever requested consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and been rejected or were currently under consideration for status with the Council.

27. **Mr. Siddiqui** (Pakistan) said that his delegation would also like more information on the 41 organizations' status with the Economic and Social Council as well as on the accreditation process for NGOs with the Committee in general.

28. **The Chairman** said the Secretariat would provide information on the organizations' status with the Economic and Social Council in due course. With regard to the accreditation process, he said that the Bureau and the Secretariat examined applications using criteria that depended on whether the organization was applying for accreditation or for observer status. Taking those criteria into account as well as the merits of the application, in other words the organization's contribution to the Palestinian cause, the Bureau made a recommendation to the Committee. He pointed out that different bodies had different accreditation processes, in keeping with their varying mandates.

29. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to accredit the 41 organizations listed in working paper No. 6.

30. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.